

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS:

Please amend the drawings with the attached sheet of amended drawing figures.

Figure 1E has been amended to better set forth the relationship between the holder plate 17 and the slits 13a, 13b.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet

REMARKS

The Examiner is thanked for the due consideration given the application. The specification has been amended to improve the language. A replacement sheet of drawing figures is attached to this paper.

Claims 54-60, 64, 66, 68-75 and 114-118 are pending in the application. Claims 61-63, 65, 67, 91-103, 105-107 and 110-111 have been cancelled by this amendment. Claim 54 has been amended to generally incorporate subject matter from cancelled claims 61-63, 65 and 67. Claims 114-117 are newly presented. Claims 114 and 115 generally set forth conditional limitations canceled from the previous claims. Claims 115 and 118 find support in, e.g., Figure 3C. Claim 117 generally corresponds to claim 54 without utilizing "means" recitations. Other claim amendments improve the language and antecedent basis in a non-narrowing fashion.

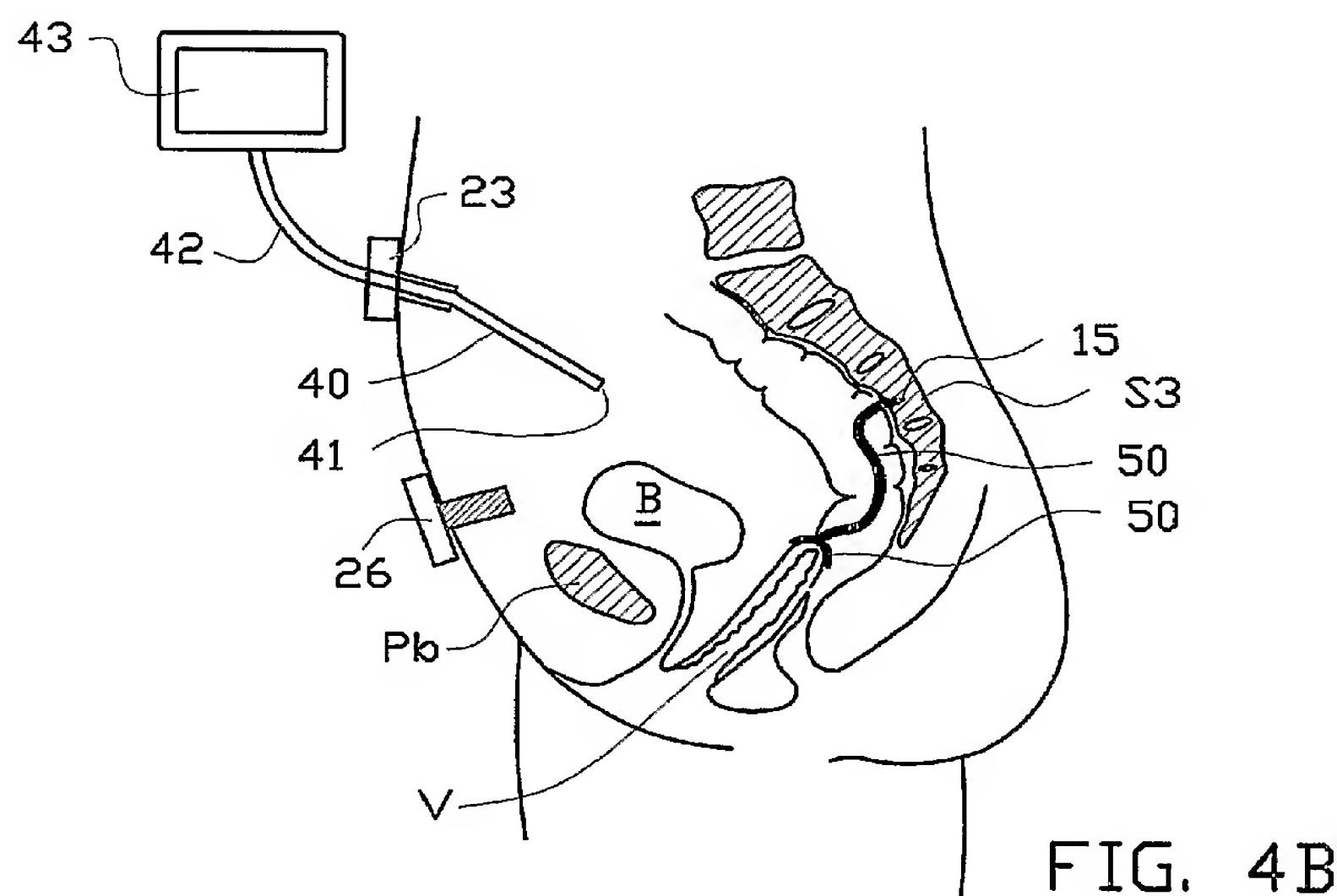
No new matter is believed to be added to the application by this amendment.

The Drawings

The drawings are objected to as not showing all the reference numerals discussed in the specification, and for showing reference numerals that are not discussed in the specification.

The drawing figures and the specification have been amended so that the reference numerals and the description correspond.

However, it is respectfully noted that in regards to the laparoscope 40, this feature has already been shown in Figure 4B (in conjunction with associated elements), which is reproduced below.



Claim Objections

Claims 58 and 72 have been objected to as containing informalities. The comments in the Office Action have been considered, and the claims have been amended to be free from informalities.

Rejection Under 35 USC §112 Second Paragraph

Claims 54-75, 91-103, 105-107, 110 and 111 have been rejected under 35 USC §112, second paragraph as being indefinite. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The comments in the Office Action have been considered, and the claims (not canceled) have been amended to be clear, definite and have full antecedent basis.

This rejection is believed to be overcome, and withdrawal thereof is respectfully requested.

Art Rejections

Claims 54, 59-68, 72, 91-103, 105, 107, 110 and 111 have been rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by LI (U.S. Patent 5,594,057).

Claims 54-62, 64-44, 68, 71, 72, 74, 91-95, 97, 98, 103 and 105-107 have been rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by THIERFELDER et al. (U.S. Publication 2002/0028980).

Claim 69 has been rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over LI in view of LOVUOLO (U.S. Publication 2002/0143234).

Claim 69 has been rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over LI in view of THIERFELDER et al.

Claims 70, 73 and 75 have been rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over LI in view of WORTRICH (U.S. Patent 5,458,606).

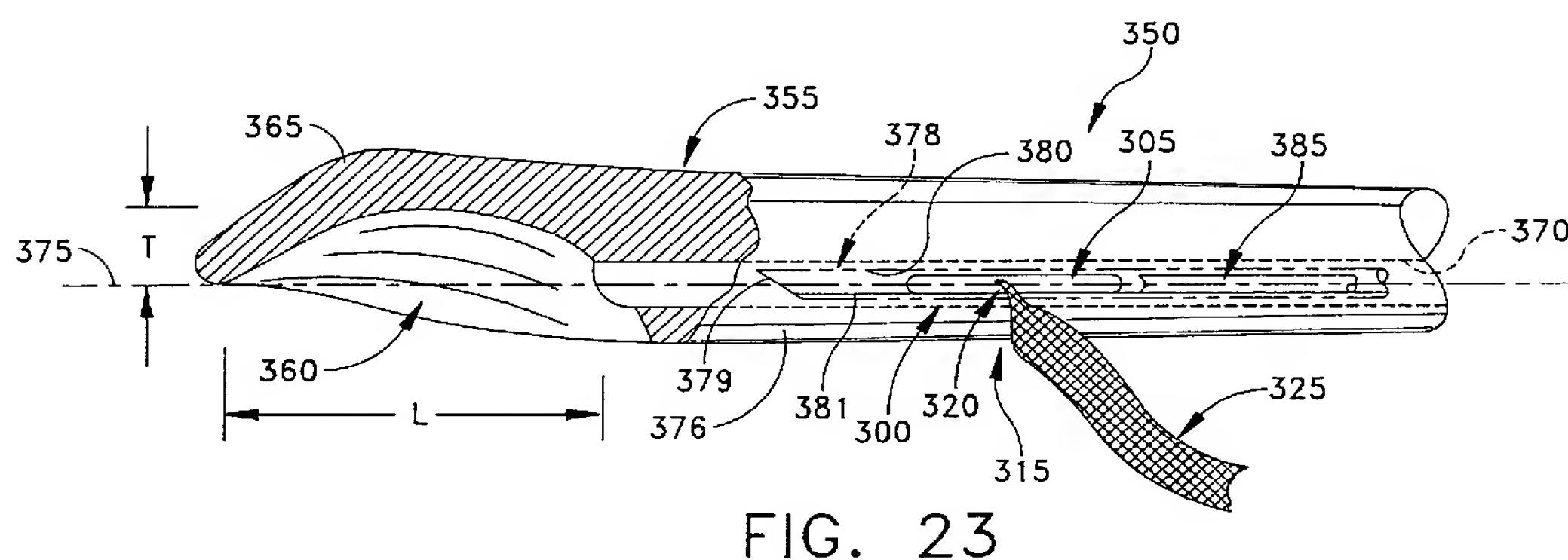
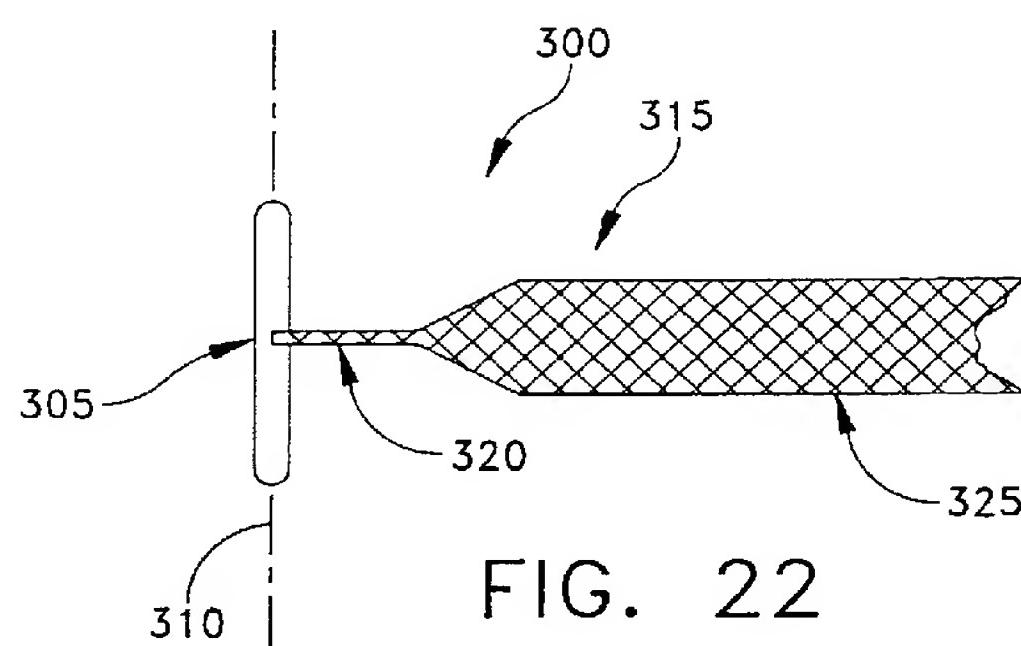
Claims 70, 73 and 75 have been rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over THIERFELDER et al. in view of WORTRICH.

These rejections are respectfully traversed.

First, it is noted that independent claim 54 now incorporates subject matter from claims 61-63, 65 and 67, which has the effect of instantly overcoming the anticipation rejection over THIERFELDER et al.

In the Office Action only LI has been cited against the subject matter of claims 63 and 67, but differences between LI and these claims are set forth below.

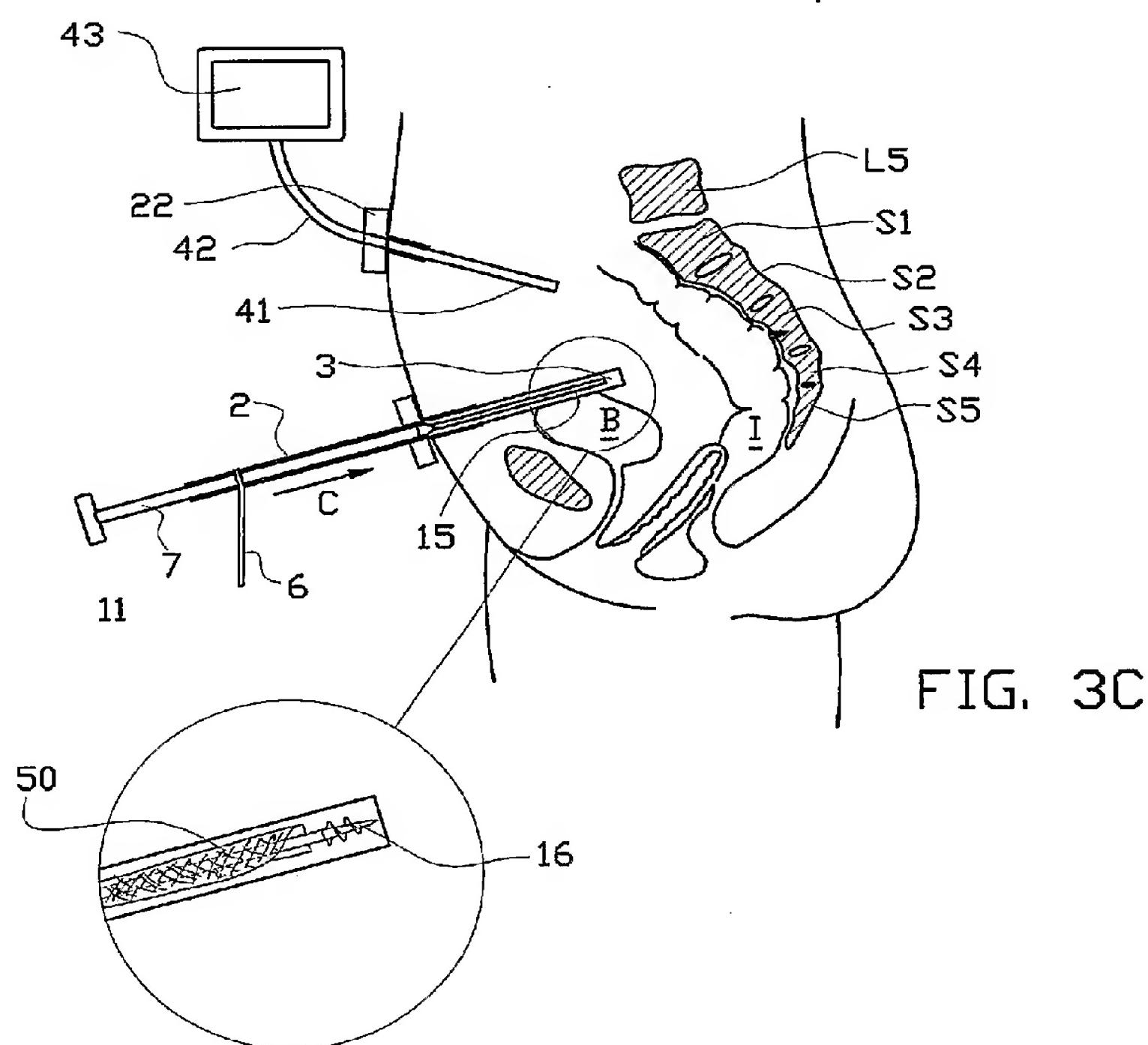
The Office Action refers to Figures 22 and 23 of LI, which are reproduced below.



Although in LI (Figures 22 and 23, and the corresponding description starting at column 15, line 66 to column 17, line 37) the suspension strap is partly situated within the housing 355, LI explicitly requires that at least the second portion 325 of the suspension strap 315 extends beyond the

housing 355 (as described, for example, at column 16, lines 58-62 and column 17, lines 12-17.

In contrast, the connection means (mat 50) of the present invention is wrapped around the second (inner) tube so that it can completely be positioned within the first (outer) tube, as is exemplarily shown in the enlargement of Figure 3C of the application, which is reproduced below.



In contrast, LI explicitly teaches that a part of the suspension strap has to project out of the housing, and thus teaches away from the present invention, in which the mat is completely situated within the outer tube. This difference is clearly set forth in the independent claims of the present invention. See also claims 116 and 118.

LI thus fails to anticipate a claimed embodiment of the present invention. One of ordinary skill and creativity would fail to produce a claimed embodiment of the present invention from a knowledge of the applied art, and a *prima facie* case of unpatentability has thus not been made.

These rejections are believed to be overcome, and withdrawal thereof is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

The Examiner is thanked for considering the Information Disclosure Statement filed July 19, 2006 and for making the references therein of record in the application.

Prior art of record but not utilized is believed to be non-pertinent to the instant claims.

As no issues remain, the issuance of a Notice of Allowability is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future submissions, to charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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